Schoolscapes

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A Discussion on the New Québec Education Program

Jean-Yves Daigle

The work of the Ministère de l'Éducation must be well underway if the timetable for implementation of the new Quebec Education Program is to be honoured. Over 60 people, in addition to regular staff, are working on the production of the new programs and more than 250 people from schools and school boards have been invited (and will be invited again) to express their opinions on the content of all the new programs of study.

In order to find out how the work is proceeding and to give us an overview of just what the new Quebec Education Program consists of, I met with Margaret Rioux-Dolan and Claude Giroux, director and assistant director, respectively, of the Direction de la formation générale des jeunes at the Ministère.

J.-Y. Daigle *You are working on re-writing the programs of study. What are the main criteria guiding your work?*
M. Rioux-Dolan It would be more accurate to say that we are working on an in-depth overhaul or a complete update of all the programs of study. To avoid any ambiguity, let us remember that in the Educational Policy Statement, Québec Schools on Course, the mission of the school is clearly stated from the outset: to provide instruction, to socialize and to provide qualifications. To accomplish this mission we are obligated to bring changes into the curriculum and, consequently, we must adjust some of its elements—things like evaluation of learning, certification of studies, initial training and the professional development of teaching personnel. We must also look closely at the whole question of instructional materials.

J.-Y. Daigle *Is it really necessary to go that far? To re-examine everything?*
M. Rioux-Dolan I think it is. Over the last several years we have done a great deal of reflection, examining Québec schools from all angles—think of the Estates General on Education, for example. A broad consensus was reached around the realization that important changes were necessary if the schools were to accomplish their objectives of ensuring that students achieve success. Let me come back to the programs of study. I firmly believe that to accomplish the mission of the school there are two questions that must be answered: "What knowledge and competencies must the students have acquired by the end of their education?" and "What competencies must they acquire related to skills, attitudes and social capabilities that will prepare them to fully participate in the next millennium?"

J.-Y. Daigle *I notice that the word "competency" appears in both your questions and that in the first question it is associated with knowledge. How do you define the word "competency?"*
G. Giroux If you dash to your dictionary you will find that the word competency is related to a "capacity" and that this word refers to an aptitude, which is, according the dictionary, "a person's natural or acquired disposition to do something." Take driving a car as an example. In order to drive a car competently it is essential that I know my vehicle and understand its behaviour, that I know and understand the rules of the road, that I know and understand the principles of defensive driving, that I have a positive attitude, good reflexes and that I develop the required skills. These are the essentials. What will make me a competent driver will be my capacity, in any situation, on a slippery, wet or dry road, to drive my vehicle adequately.

(Continued on page 2)

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, FRANÇOIS LEGAULT, ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO THE TIMETABLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW CURRICULUM

Hubert Tremblay
Direction des communications

The Minister of State for Education and Youth, François Legault, announced several weeks ago several modifications to the timetable for implementation of the new curriculum. These decisions, as he pointed out, "are intended to ease the educational path of students" while reaffirming the reform that is underway.

Mr. Legault announced that he was postponing for one year the adoption of the basic school regulations, initially scheduled for July 1, 1999. The current subject-time allocation will therefore continue to apply through the 1999-2000 school year.

Certain changes will also be introduced into the present timetable for implementing programs of study at the elementary and secondary level. This means that the implementation of programs of study will be extended over a period of two years and will still include a first year for **integration** and a second year for **compulsory application**. This implementation will be carried out by cycle, except for certain secondary-level programs.

The Minister explained that these changes are designed to ensure that all cohorts of students will be spared having to follow a path that straddles the present programs and the new programs, and to allow teaching personnel a suitable period in which to assimilate the new programs of study.

See calendar on page 4

2007-03537/

Revision for the Year 2000

RULING ON THE BASIC SCHOOL REGULATIONS FOR PRESCHOOL AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EDUCATION AND FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

Louise Laurence
Direction de la formation générale des jeunes

As stipulated in section 447 of the Education Act, which regulates our educational system, the government establishes **basic school regulations** that specify the nature and objectives of educational services, student services and special services, as well as the general framework for their organization. They contain regulations related to the mission of the school, the registration of students, school attendance, the school calendar, evaluation of learning and the certification of studies.

There are presently basic school regulations for preschool and elementary school education, and basic school regulations for secondary school education. In the context of education reform, these regulations must be modified according to the new provisions of the Education Act, which confers new powers on schools and school organizations.

A draft regulation was developed in 1998 followed by consultation among school organizations, associations and unions. Among the questions raised in the educational community that required clarification, specification or development we can mention student services, the situation of 16-to-18-year-old students, evaluation of learning and the certification of studies.

The Minister has therefore decided to pursue this work so that the various partners will be asked to comment on a new version of the Regulations during the coming months, and so that the new version can come into effect on July 1, 2000.

(A Discussion on the New Quebec Education Program)

M. Rioux-Dolan When we say that the school must aim to produce competent students, these competencies are always related to skills, attitudes and social capabilities. To facilitate the acquisition of this knowledge we must equip students to integrate and use capacities, skills and knowledge that will enable them to act effectively in the situations they are living in or will be living in.

J.-Y. Daigle The question, then, is "How do we do that?"

M. Rioux-Dolan Exactly! This is why we have had to innovate and why we propose to enrich the Québec Education Program with what we call the "Program of Programs."

C. Giroux I understand that the name "Program of Programs" raises eyebrows, but the term corresponds exactly to what it means. The Program of Programs consists of two main components. First, it refers to cross-curricular competencies, or capacities that are acquired in academic disciplines but which are transferable to every day life. Also, in having contact with academic disciplines students develop intellectual, methodological, personal, social and communication competencies. These competencies are essential to daily living and therefore must be transferable from the discipline to daily life. To facilitate this transfer we needed to identify domains and life situations.

M. Rioux-Dolan This is the second component of the Program of Programs. If we want students to truly learn, they must be able to integrate their knowledge. The best way to answer the question "Why should I learn this?" is certainly to demonstrate by referring to situations in daily life. All of us, students and non-students alike, live in a world where issues of consumerism, the environment, the media, health, safety, sexuality, interculturalism, citizenship, international understanding, personal and professional orientation, the entrepreneurial world, personal identity and life in society are part of our daily experience. All these issues are the subject of the Program of Programs and we believe they will bring a broader meaning to the material that is taught in the academic disciplines.

J.-Y. Daigle This seems to me to be a major change. You say that each discipline should be attached to something you call a life situation or several life situations?

C. Giroux Yes, and this is not as new as you may think. Many teachers are already working in this direction. It is important to be constantly and clearly establishing a complementary relationship between what the students are experiencing in their lives and the learning that they need. The Program of Programs gives greater meaning to the programs of study. Since the Program of Programs will place academic learning in a wider context and link it to the students' own lives, it will encourage the development of competencies, capacities and skills.

J.-Y. Daigle In other words, you are enriching the program of studies. Am I right?

M. Rioux-Dolan If you are asking whether we are working to increase the content of the programs, the answer is no. We are working to determine, for each program of study, which competencies are essential for our students to acquire. This is very different because this will allow us to place more emphasis on the development of capacities and skills related to the acquisition and mastery of competencies.

J.-Y. Daigle A reform of this magnitude requires an implementation strategy. What are the broad outlines of this?

M. Rioux-Dolan We must finish writing all the programs for the elementary level because the reform will begin in Québec schools in September 1999. The innovative aspect of implementation is that, for each cycle, implementation will be spread over two years. The first year is devoted to helping educational personnel assimilate the elements of the reform. This means a training period will be organized by schools and school boards. It is only in the second year that the programs will come into effect everywhere. We begin in September 1999 with the first cycle of elementary school. This is the period of training and integration. In September 2000 the new programs for the first cycle of the elementary level will come into effect.

J.-Y. Daigle We are at the very beginning of the reform. What more can we say about the ongoing process?

M. Rioux-Dolan Apart from the fact that the program coordinators are doing a tremendous job, I must point out that they are not working in a vacuum. Each program coordinator is supported by a team of specialists from the educational community. And their work is being validated by others who are also part of that community. We mustn't forget that much importance is being given to the training of educational personnel and this is why an entire year will be devoted principally to helping educators assimilate the new programs of study. Without training there can be no real implementation of the reform.

Without training there can be no real implementation of the reform. — M. Rioux-Dolan

COALITION FORMED TO SUPPORT CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN ENGLISH SCHOOLS

Barbara Goode, *Services à la communauté anglophone*

Over the next 5 years, all elementary and high schools in Québec will be engaged in a fundamental reform of the curriculum. Within the Ministère de l'Éducation the Services à la communauté anglophone (SCA) has the responsibility of providing support to English school boards by helping to create the context for the successful implementation of the renewed Québec school curriculum. This context will include an educational community which has become familiar with the intent and content of the renewed Québec curriculum and schools that are able to access the resources and support they will need.

The services which will be developed to create this context will reflect the belief that the success of any reform is dependent upon the empowerment of people, individually and collectively, and upon the development of system capacity to take charge of change.

Schools are at the center of curriculum renewal and they will need the support of the many partners and resources which presently exist in our educational system. For this reason the Services à la communauté anglophone has invited the institutions and organizations that represent teachers, school administrators, school board personnel, researchers, and parents to join forces in the Curriculum Coalition. The Coalition's role is to disseminate information on curriculum implementation to the various constituencies and to complement implementation efforts through the development of activities consistent with the mandate of the groups they represent. For example, universities could initiate an activity to inform teachers-in-training about the content of the revised programmes of study or parent groups could publish a series of articles on curriculum reform in their association's newsletter.

In addition to the Curriculum Coalition, the Services à la communauté anglophone has also convened a working group to develop implementation models appropriate to the characteristics of the English sector. Composed of representatives of school boards, private schools associations, principals, teachers and the MEQ, the Design Committee has the mandate to plan, coordinate and make available resources and materials for the delivery of services to schools. The Committee will also develop strategies for the monitoring of the implementation process and plan mechanisms that will allow for feedback to the programme developers. The Design Committee is a service provider to the curriculum implementation planners of each school board.

The twenty-one member Design Committee began its work in early February at a two-day seminar in Montréal. Noel Burke, Director of Instructional Services at the New Frontiers School Board, was elected to chair the group. The Committee will reconvene on March 11th to begin the planning of support services for the English sector.

More information about the composition of the Curriculum Coalition and the resources that will be developed by the Design Committee, will appear in upcoming editions of *Schoolscapes*.

DESIGN COMMITTEE

School Board Representatives:
Noel Burke, New Frontiers School Board, Chairperson
Laiq Hanaff, Sir Wilfrid-Laurier School Board
Julie Hobbs, Riverside School Board
Diane Labbé, Central Québec School Board
Dennis McCullough, Eastern Townships School Board
Lucy Mendonca, Littoral School Board
Bob Mills, Lester B. Pearson School Board
Don Reid, English Montreal School Board
Stuart Richards, Eastern Shores School Board
Ainsley Ross, Western Québec School Board

Private Schools:
Hélène Bourdeau, Québec Association of Independent Schools
Félix Mélloul, Association of Jewish Day Schools

Association of Administrators of English Schools of Québec:
Don Hastings, Riverside School Board
Leo Vendetti, Sir Wilfrid-Laurier School Board
Pat Moffa, English Montreal School Board

Québec Provincial Association of Teachers:
3 elementary school teachers (to be named)

Ministère de l'Éducation:
Elaine Froeland, Services à la communauté anglophone
Jim Sullivan, Services à la communauté anglophone
Lynn Travers, Services à la communauté anglophone

First provincial meetings on curriculum reform

Luce Brossard, *Vie Pédagogique*

February 2, 1998 Workshop in Québec City

The first provincial meetings on curriculum reform were held on February 2 in Québec City and on February 5 in Montréal. Several hundred representatives from school boards and private schools met to receive information on the reform from spokespersons from the Ministère and to discuss their impressions and expectations in workshops. Luce Brossard, editor-in-chief of *Vie Pédagogique*, presented a personal synopsis of these workshops at the end of the day. The main points of her account are presented below.

The phrase that was most often heard throughout the day was "How do we go about . . . ", as if the question of why were settled once and for all, which does not appear to be the case at all, judging by certain comments that I have been hearing here and there . . . . That being said, I have the feeling that all of us, whatever the particular job we are doing, experience a need to improve our skills in the art of initiating and managing change.

Challenges

Under the heading of challenges I have included both obstacles to be surmounted and difficulties to be resolved. I have selected ten of them, in no particular order of priorities, except for the first one. As Philippe Perrenoud pointed out in an interview, it would certainly seem to be the first step to be taken:

1. **To invoke** the commitment of all partners, and especially of those in the schools, to the basis of the reform—commitments to the reasons for undertaking this reform and to the orientations that have been chosen. To distribute information is not enough. We must share the conviction that this reform is necessary and that it corresponds to expectations and meets real needs. If we do not believe in it there is no reason to mobilize our forces.

2. **To encourage** teachers to adopt the paradigm that underlies the whole curriculum reform, that of learning. If we want teaching practices to help students acquire competencies, we must allow teachers to think about their current practices, to state their beliefs, to understand what the adoption of a new model will mean to them, and to express their doubts and hesitations, so that we are working from their ideas. Therefore we must establish the habit of working as teams in the schools, opening the doors of the classrooms to see and be seen. In short, we must encourage a transformation of the professional identity of teachers.

3. **To encourage** school administrations to assume their roles as pedagogical leaders, to mobilize their school teams and to support them. School administrators, like teachers, will require professional development for they, too, must adjust to changes in their roles.

4. **To encourage** educational services personnel to adopt the model recommended for teaching practice and to support the school teams. Consistency requires that all actions undertaken at all levels of organization be based on the paradigm of learning.

5. **To convince** students and parents to accept changes, especially in models for the evaluation of learning and the communication of information to parents. Students who are currently succeeding will not necessarily be interested in entering a learning approach that will be more demanding of them.

6. **To make** major changes in the organization of work in the schools. Currently the piecemeal division of time and tasks does not favour the implementation of teaching practices that lead to the acquisition of competencies. Collective agreements and school organization must therefore be adjusted to the goals of the reform.

7. **To revise** the methods for the evaluation of learning to correspond to the orientations chosen for the programs. If we want to send a clear message to the educational community about our determination to institute reform, we must show our colours on the issue of the evaluation of learning. If we do not, teachers will continue in work to see that their students obtain good marks on examinations and they will be right to do so because that is what the parents expect from them.

8. **To accept** that not everyone proceeds at the same pace or needs the same type of support, which means that some may need longer periods of support.

9. **To involve** universities in the movement so that new teachers acquire a certain familiarity with the nature of the reform and a concrete understanding of what it means to help students acquire competencies.

10. **To reflect** now on the type of "instructional" materials that will be appropriate.

Finally, there is one challenge that underlies all the others—that of building cooperation and establishing a culture of change in order to go beyond voluntary action.

February 5, 1998 Workshop in Montreal

COMMITMENT: THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT OF REFORM

Nicole Gagnon, *Direction de la formation et de la titularisation du personnel scolaire*

No reform can succeed without the commitment of those entrusted with implementing it. Therefore, to ensure the success of curriculum reform, it is essential that all those who hold an educational position understand its objectives, assimilate knowledge related to it and develop new competencies. But what lessons can we draw from the past in this regard?

THE PROGRAMS OF THE 1980s

The implementation of the new programs of study in the 1980s was an occasion for the Ministère de l'Éducation and the school boards to organize in-service training activities in which all teachers participated.

A study carried out by the Ministère in 1996-97 revealed that these in-service training activities did indeed help to inform and sensitize teachers about the new programs of study and ministerial policies. However, they did not guarantee that teachers fully assimilated the programs of study, in spite of some success in that regard.

The most significant points in a study of this kind are often the suggestions that they contain. Some of these are listed below.

- Encourage the movement toward allowing the school team to take charge of in-service training, especially of the definition of needs and the organization of activities.
- Apply the same pedagogical principles in the in-service training activities as those recommended in the programs to be implemented.
- Make use of the competencies already acquired by the participants and find links between the old programs and the new.
- Develop new training formulas to include **information sessions**, **integration sessions** (application and integration of content) and **feedback sessions** (feedback of information to program designers and those responsible for various policies and educational measures).
- Encourage mutual assistance activities, peer support in the classroom, teacher centres, pedagogical forums, etc.
- Set up regional training teams and make them available to school boards for the in-service training of their personnel (as is done in the organization framework for students with behavioural difficulties).

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The situations of different educational communities vary considerably with respect to implementing the reform. Some of them are taking their very first steps and have not yet begun to assimilate the basics of the reform, while others have resolutely rolled up

their sleeves and formed teams to pilot the reform. There are even schools in which teachers have started to work together by cycle.

Among communities whose preparations for the reform are already underway, a number of strategies are being employed:

- preparing summaries of what has already been accomplished and identifying resources that can be relied upon (cooperative groups, international education programs, action-research projects, program developers, special education personnel, the model for supporting Montreal schools, where a school may be sponsored by an organization or a person of its choice, changes in the role of educational consultants);
- **assembling persons working on developing programs to distribute information, support the schools, etc.;**
- offering training for school administrators;
- proposing avenues of reflective practice to teachers;
- setting up a regional organization.

No matter at what stage the work on implementing the reform may be, everything that has been done so far and everything that can immediately be undertaken to encourage school teams to reflect on their conception of learning may be considered useful, because it is unthinkable that the programs should not be based on what we now know about how children learn.

As is natural in this type of meeting, some expectations regarding the Ministère were expressed. The participants hope that the Ministère will:

- sponsor a special event to mark the launching of the reform;
- distribute coordinated information to allow all partners to have an overview of the reform and its goals so that it becomes a social project;
- deliver documents written in language that is accessible to the average person and which does not ignore what has already been accomplished in several communities;
- indicate the direction and the ultimate goal and allow the educational communities to organize for themselves how they will arrive at this goal;
- publish the findings of scientific research on competencies.

In implementing the reform it is important to bear in mind that we are working with people and that we are undertaking changes on several fronts. We must therefore be attentive to individuals and realize that no change can be undertaken without their cooperation. It is necessary to begin working with people from where they are now and go on from there.

It is now or never. The school must be turned into a learning organization, because in this reform we are all learning. No one knows exactly what must be done, nor how it should be done. To quote Philippe Meirieu, like the students, we are expected to learn to do something we do not know how to do, by doing it.

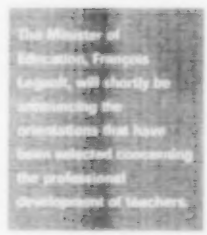
In this case, what we need first and foremost is courage, of the kind that Philippe Meirieu calls "the courage to take the first steps."

EXPERIMENTAL PROJECTS IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Through its regional offices, the Ministère has supported the organization of cooperative implementation activities. Not only have these experimental projects helped to develop a productive and dynamic atmosphere in the communities in question, but they have provided an opportunity to outline the principles and orientations of a new culture of professional development that goes beyond traditional ideas on the subject. All this is the topic of an orientation paper that was submitted to a wide audience for consultation.

A number of interesting ideas have emerged from these projects, namely, the need to:

- integrate the concept of in-service training into that of professional development, that is, to plan activities as part of an integrated process, rather than offer them on an ad hoc basis;
- stop viewing professional development as a way to adjust to "bureaucratic idiosyncrasies" but to see it instead as an opportunity to develop the skills needed to meet the new challenges facing today's schools;
- shift the focus from individual skills to qualified school teams and to the creation of a "community of learners";
- not consider one's professional development as ever being complete but rather as being ongoing and ever responsive to the learning needs of students;
- move beyond providing access to in-service training to some school staff to providing access to professional development to all school staff;
- organize in-service training activities on the basis of the expressed needs of teachers rather than having them choose from a predetermined selection of offerings;
- move beyond a passive model of in-service delivery where the teacher receives training from an expert, to a model where the teacher is at times an active learner and at other times a resource to his or her peers;
- move beyond in-service training geared to the acquisition of compartmentalized knowledge to in-service training geared to the development of integrated teaching practices;
- move beyond evaluation where participants merely state what they liked or disliked about an activity to evaluation based on their perceptions of the medium- and long-term usefulness of what they learned, and the monitoring of progress on an individual and team basis.


The Minister of Education, François Legault, will shortly be announcing the orientations that have been developed concerning the professional [illegible] of teachers.

LESSONS OF THE PAST

Lessons can be drawn from all the points above, and the Minister has done so in his announcement of the upcoming orientations for the professional development of teachers.

First lesson: Information is much better received and assimilated by people who are given the opportunity to make connections between their prior practice and the new orientations.

Second lesson: Integration requires the active involvement of those who must learn to apply new ways of doing things.

Third lesson: Reform cannot be implemented without a series of measures involving all the concerned individuals and levels of the educational system.

CALENDAR

FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PRESCHOOL, ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL

Program	PRESCHOOL	ELEMENTARY (Year of integration / Year of application)			SECONDARY (Year of integration / Year of application)				
		1st cycle	2nd cycle	3rd cycle	1st cycle			2nd cycle	
		1 and 2	3 and 4	5 and 6	I	II	III	IV	V
LANGUAGES									
TECHNOLOGY, SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS									
ARTS EDUCATION									
SOCIAL SCIENCES									
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT									
PROGRAMS OF PROJECTS									

* Structured programs of study (i.e. more than one kind of difficulty)

Québec

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